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**MASSACHUSETTS PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS CONFIRM SEASON'S FIRST
SAMPLE OF WEST NILE VIRUS MOSQUITO FOUND**

Department of Public Health urges residents to cover up or wear bug spray containing DEET

BOSTON - The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today confirmed that West Nile Virus (WNV) had been detected in mosquitoes for the first time this year. The mosquito sample was collected June 30th in Halifax, part of Plymouth County. No human cases of WNV or eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) have been confirmed to date this year, although there have been 10 cases of WNV in humans during the last five years.

While WNV can infect people of all ages, people older than 50 are at higher risk for severe disease. WNV is usually transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Last year, there were 26 WNV positive mosquito samples in Massachusetts with one horse from Hampshire County diagnosed with the disease.

"We've had perfect summer weather so far this year in Massachusetts," said DPH State Epidemiologist Dr. Al DeMaria. "Perfect weather means we spend more time outdoors - which gives the mosquitoes more chances to bite us. When you head out to watch the fireworks this weekend, don't forget to pack the bug spray."

For more information about WNV positive results from mosquitoes in 2010, visit the state's Arbovirus Surveillance Information page at: www.mass.gov/dph/wnv.

Residents can protect themselves and their loved ones from illnesses caused by mosquitoes by following these important guidelines from DPH:

Avoid Mosquito Bites

- Be aware of peak mosquito hours. The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many mosquitoes. Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning.

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- Clothing can help reduce mosquito bites. Wear long sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors to help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.
- Apply insect repellent when outdoors. Use a repellent with DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), permethrin, picaridin (KBR 3023), oil of lemon eucalyptus [p -methane 3, 8-diol (PMD)] or IR3535, according to the instructions on the product label. DEET products should not be used on infants under two months of age, and should be used in concentrations of 30% or less on older children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age.

Mosquito-Proof Your Home

- Drain standing water. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Limit the number of places around your home for mosquitoes to breed by either draining or discarding items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty any unused flowerpots and wading pools, and change water in birdbaths frequently.
- Install or repair screens. Keep mosquitoes outside by having tightly -fitting screens on all of your windows and doors.

In addition to the DPH website, at www.mass.gov/dph/wnv, information about WNV and EEE is available by calling the DPH information line at 1 -866-MASS-WNV (1-866-627-7968), or the DPH Epidemiology Program at 617 -983-6800.

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